

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:
 - receiving a communication from a user via a first communication device;
 - receiving data identifying a message card;
 - sending message data to a second communication device.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - the sending being conditioned upon a payment balance.
3. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - authorizing the sending in response to the data which identify the message card.
4. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - receiving data identifying the user;
 - comparing the data which identify the user against a plurality of known-valid data; and
 - conditioning the sending upon whether the comparing validates the user.
5. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - selecting the second communication device in response to the data which identify the message card.
6. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - receiving data identifying the second communication device.
7. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - selecting the message data in response to the data which identify the message card.
8. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - receiving the message data from the user via the first communication device.

1 9. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

2 prompting the user to select the message data from a plurality of predetermined sets of
3 message data; and

4 receiving data indicating the user's selection of the message data.

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1 10. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

2 terminating communication with the second communication device without connecting the
3 first communication device to the second communication device.

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1 11. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

2 connecting the first communication device to the second communication device, enabling the
3 user to communicate information beyond the message data to the second communication device

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1 16. The apparatus of claim 12 wherein:
2 the apparatus comprises a card; and
3 the memory comprises a magnetic stripe.
4

1 17. The apparatus of claim 12 wherein:
2 the apparatus comprises a card; and
3 the memory comprises a semiconductor device.
4

1 18. The apparatus of claim 12 wherein the preprogrammed custom ID message further
2 comprises:
3 a plurality of preprogrammed custom ID messages.
4

1 19. An apparatus for use in making a communication from a first communication device to a
2 second communication device coupled to a communication network, the apparatus comprising:
3 a memory having recorded therein,
4 a custom ID message for delivery to the second communication device upon usage of
5 the apparatus at the first communication device.
6

1 20. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein there are a plurality of second communication devices
2 coupled to the communication network, and wherein:
3 the memory further having recorded therein,
4 a destination specifier for specifying a predetermined one of the second
5 communication devices to which the custom ID message should be delivered.
6

1 21. An improvement in a telephone calling card having a memory, the calling card for use at any
2 of a plurality of telephones each having a respective caller ID value, wherein the improvement
3 comprises the memory having stored therein:
4 a substantially unique identifying value; and
5 a predetermined message for substitution in place of the respective caller ID value of a
6 telephone at which the calling card is used.
7

1 22. The improvement in the telephone calling card of claim 21, wherein the improvement further
2 comprises the memory having stored therein:

3 a plurality of predetermined messages for substitution in place of the respective caller ID
4 value.

1 23. The improvement in the telephone calling card of claim 21, wherein the improvement further
2 comprises the memory having a storage area therein for holding:

3 a value specifying a respective telephone number which is to be called upon usage of the
4 calling card, the respective telephone number to be stored in the memory at a time later than the
5 manufacturing of the calling card.

1 24. The improvement in the telephone calling card of claim 22, wherein the improvement further
2 comprises the memory having a storage area therein for holding:

3 a value specifying an account balance, the account balance to be stored in the memory at a
4 time later than the manufacturing of the calling card.